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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,  
MARCH 12, 2003

**¶1.** This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 12, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

**Milli Gazete:** It is reported that the Kurdish units stationed in Dohuk, close to the Turkish border, returned to their bases on weekend to confront Turkey's likely military incursion into northern Iraq. Babaker Zebari, the commander of Kurdish forces in the region, claimed they were ready for any Turkish intervention. Zebari claimed that "if Turks wanted problems, they would be held responsible for them." The Kurdish commander said that they would attack the Turkish forces the moment they came, even though they had only RPGs against the Turks' tanks. He remarked that they might not be able to hold the front but would launch guerilla attacks. In his TV program on Saturday, Mesut Barzani claimed that penetration of Turkish troops into Northern Iraq would create "serious consequences" and that he hoped the US would not betray the Kurds.

**Milliyet:** Based on its interviews with ordinary Turkomen in Erbil, BBC claimed that the Turkomen, as opposed to the Turkmen Front supported by Ankara, were generally happy with their status and did not need any protection from Turkey. The BBC reporter said the number of Turkomen in northern Iraq reached 2.5 million. Cevdet Naccar, a Turkomen, said: "We enjoy the same rights as the Kurds in Northern Iraq. There is no need for the Turkish army to intervene on the pretext of rescuing the Turkomen." An antique dealer named Halis Yunus said: "They (the Turkish army) cannot protect us against theft and looting anyway." A Turkomen jeweler expressed the view that the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomen lived together and could settle their problems among themselves. The BBC reporter claimed that the only group that actively supported Turkey's intervention was the Turkmen Front, headed by Sanan Ahmet Aga, who received his orders from Ankara.

**Radikal/Turkiye:** Families and NGO representatives protested against statements made by northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani. 300 people who gathered in front of the Martyrs Monument in Diyarbakir yesterday morning shouted anti-Barzani and anti-Talabani slogans and dispersed peacefully after singing the Turkish National Anthem and the delivering of the speech by Ahmet Buyukbirc, President of the Martyrs Association's Diyarbakir Chapter.

**Milliyet/Sabah/Hurriyet:** LA Times' photographer Donald Bartletti, ABC News cameraman Alan Weeks, and Turkish producer Elif Ural tried to cross into northern Iraq illegally. They were arrested by jandarmas who opened fire in the air. The jandarmas on patrol had noticed the journalists as they were wading across the Hezil River. The journalists and the person who assisted them were given a physical examination and interrogated at Silopi Jandarma Command, and then were brought before a court in the morning. The journalists were given a fine of USD 54 for violating immigration laws. As the journalists took a cab to Onsar Hotel in Cizre, they were escorted by police. It was decided that Bartletti and Weeks would be deported from Turkey. (Note: That is correct. End note.)

**Radikal:** There has been a boom in demand for rental property, due to its proximity to the

Iraqi border. The rents for houses, shops, storage facilities, and vacant land have increased by 300 to 500 percent. Agit Ozdemir, a pioneer who opened the first real estate office in Silopi, said he rented out 19 houses in one week.

**Milliyet/Radikal:** War preparations in Mardin, which is in the position of being the US operation center, continues at full speed. The US intensified work at a furniture factory rented in the Organized Industrial Zone of Mardin. Mobile toilets, bunk beds, mobile telephones, foodstuffs, and all sorts of logistical material are being stored in the furniture plant. Meanwhile, Turkish armored units conducted maneuvers in empty fields along the highway in Kiziltepe. Appearance of the armored vehicles in town created excitement.

**Cumhuriyet/Bolge:** Under the first modernization of ports and airports motion submitted to the Turkish National Grand Assembly, the US keeps sending military equipment. The majority of the shipments to the region come to Iskenderun port, where 5000 US troops and 20-25 ships are reported to be waiting off shore at Karpaz.

**Radikal:** Truck drivers who agreed with contracting firms on transporting military equipment from Iskenderun port to the Southeast for USD 100 per day said they would stop carrying the material because they had not been paid for 18 days. Thanks to the intervention of Turkish military officials, the contracting firms gave an advance to each trucker and transportation resumed only thereafter. 89 TIR truck left Iskenderun port while 15 TIR trucks loaded with military equipment departed Incirlik AB for the Southeast yesterday.

**Dunya:** Because of lack of storage room, some U.S. military vehicles and materials were put in a yarn factory outside the Mardin Organized Industrial Zone. The Americans are trying to rent 500 shops in Evren Industrial Site in Sanliurfa as well. Turkish-speaking US soldiers walking in Diyarbakir's streets are meeting with the local people and trying to obtain information about the region. It is reported that Americans are looking for a fully equipped hospital or medical center. It is gathered that the US plans to fly wounded soldiers to hospitals to be rented in Diyarbakir, where they have already made offers to five big private hospitals.

**Sabah/Tercuman/Hurriyet:** The Patriot missiles deployed at the 8th Main Jet Base Command of the 2nd Tactical Command in Diyarbakir were shown to the press. The Dutch commander of Patriot Air Defense Systems Command, Lt. Col. Eric Harry Abma, remarked that two of the three units of the system were deployed in Diyarbakir, while the other was deployed in Batman. He was quoted "We are here to protect people of Diyarbakir and Batman from Iraq. This is our military and political mission." The systems were made operational on March 11.

**Hurriyet:** The US Consulate in Adana opened an exhibition of photographs by famed American photographer, William Albert Allard, at the Seyhan Municipality Building. The exhibit - some 70 photographs reflecting American culture taken by National Geographic Society veteran Allard -- was opened by the American Consul, Adana Deputy Governor Bulent Egriboz, and Seyhan Mayor Yildiray Arikhan. Turkish and American invitees attended the opening reception.

HOLTZ